OBSERVATIONS ON SELECTED PROPOSITIONS from A PREFACE TO DEMOCRATIC THEORY

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Introductory Remarks

In few instances could the ancient homily "There is nothing new under the sun" apply with greater accuracy than when cited in connection with a discourse on the relation between popular governments and the societies they govern. Admittedly there may be some new methodologies used in the examination of these relations, but the propositions which result, even the most extravagant of them, appear to have historical antecedents.

Now the prospective reader may legitimately begin to wonder: "Why, then, should I read another such investigation? Is anything new or profound to be expected from it?" The author of such an exercise can but sympathize with these questions and beg that his impulse to wander in a field already trampled barren will likewise receive sympathetic understanding from the reader. Besides being an act of redundancy, this inquiry may also be an act of effontry, considering the stature of some of those figures who have previously turned their attention to many of the same questions. But a compulsion similar to that which drove most of the 18th century Scottish philosophers and theologians to write a treatise on "The Origins of Evil"[1] now spawns

another treatise by an observer of politics on the nature of the relation between popular government and society. It is almost a mandatory exercise for the student of politics.

Naturally this exercise cannot presume to be a definitive work on its subject. A far less ambitious task shall be assumed here. That task shall be an evaluation of two propositions made by Professor Robert A. Dahl in A Preface to Democratic Theory, a collection of his Charles R. Walgreen Foundation lectures. Professor Dahl's analysis is penetrating and compact, and he makes many propositions besides those to be examined here. Any comment or criticism on these two chosen propositions should not be interpreted as leveled against any other of his theses, not against the book in general. Certainly it is a mark of high regard for a work such as Professor Dahl's for this writer to wish to carry the investigation a bit further.

Of Professor Dahl's two propositions which are to be questioned, one is expressed in a single statement made by him and the other is suggested by the sense of his arguments. The former: "To assume that this country has remained democratic because of its Constitution seems to me an obvious reversal of the relation; it is much more plausible to suppose that the Constitution has remained because our society is basically democratic."[2] The second proposition is actually a more general expression of the first. It is that of

the many factors whose actions and interactions have a direct, positive bearing on democratic government--factors of individual behavior patterns, social "checks and balances," and constitutional arrangements-- of the three, the first two are far the most crucial. Professor Dahl does not present these theses as dogma, and there is some evidence he himself has modified his opinion on the subject.[3] But detached from this consideration, the propositions would seem to be of questionable validity when more intimately researched.

One final comment seems appropriate before this writer presents his evaluation. Professor Dahl nowhere gives a clinical definition of the term "democracy," leaving one to assume that he intends a common-sense interpretation of it. The term "democracy" today is used in a very general sort of way, usually referring to any form of popular government.

Traditionally, the variances in forms of popular government have been indicated by the use of more particular terms, such as republican, democratic, parliamentary, or any other of the several versions of popular government. According to the conventional meanings, republic refers to a government of people elected by citizens and constrained by a constitution. Democracy is a government in which the citizens directly operate the government, constrained only by the principle of majority rule. Parliamentary government is that in which the supreme powers of government are vested

in a parliament elected by the citizens. Professor Dahl puts this qualification on the definition of democracy: "Every advocate of democracy of whom I am aware, and every friendly definition of it, includes the idea of restraints on majorities."[4]

These terms denoting the variances in forms of popular government herein will be used in their traditional meanings, and the term "popular government" will be used rather than "democracy." The exceptions will be when either quoting or paraphrasing a source which does not observe these distinctions.

Historical Evidence Regarding the Democratic Nature of American Society

Evaluation of the first proposition--that the longevity of our Constitution owes to the democratic nature of our society--needs begin by inquiring into the degree to which American society has, historically, been democratic.

Most of the Founders viewed democracy, as then represented by the state legislatures, with measured contempt and as something to be avoided.[5] Far from attempting to create a democracy or a democratic society, these men assumed their purpose should conform to "... the transcendant law of nature and of nature's God, which declares that the safety and happiness of society are the objects at which all political institutions aim...."[6] This statement immediately suggests that Professor Dahl is incorrect in his belief that the Founders were devoted to "maximizing

democracy"[7] as an end in itself. Clearly they conceived of republican government as a means, not an end.

Democratic government had critics other than the republicans. Among some of the social influentials, as well as part of the middle class, were people with a favorable disposition toward monarchy. Of this group, perhaps Alexander Hamilton is best known to us today. During the turbulent years under the Articles of Confederation, overtures were made from a private American delegation to Prince Henry of Brandenburg (Frederick the Great's brother) inviting him to assume the non-existent throne of the young nation. George Washington was offered the crown by a loyal and admiring army. Acting with a restraint which certainly would baffle many generals or politicians, he curtly refused the opportunity.[8] The famous episode at the end of the Convention in which Dr. Franklin was asked whether we had a republic or a monarchy is surely as significant for what it suggests of the public mind as for his guarded and challenging reply: "A republic, if you can keep it." The question implies that people may have been willing to tolerate a Convention which, for all they knew, might opt for monarchy. At its inception, then, the Constitution appears not to have been an inevitable reflection of any particular democratic impulse in American society.

Another historical factor which may have a bearing on this investigation is that of mass immigration to the

United States. No other human immigration has equalled that of the 38 million people who came to America between 1820 and 1930.[9] The popular notion that these people were stifled democrats seeking only the blessings of American political liberty is probably vastly overstated. Political motivations were likely secondary to those of economics. Liberal doctrines and constitutional liberties were vague abstractions when compared to the grim economic realities facing most potential emigrants. Parliaments and courts were far away. "What poor people wanted was freedom from laws and customs that curbed individual economic enterprise."[10]

Let us take, for example, the German immigration to this country in the 1850's. It is usually described as the epitome of an immigration with its roots in political repression in the homeland. The liberal revolutions of 1848 had failed and the downtrodden, miserable, and oppressed sought refuge in America, as the theory goes. "But when the facts are examined impersonally and collectively, the investigator cannot escape the conclusion that the areas of political disturbance [cities] did not coincide with the areas of emigration [rural]."[11] Indeed, this same analysis is true of most 19th century immigration to America: "Here it must be recalled that most of the political agitation of the century was urban, and peasants had little part in the uprisings that marked the advance of democracy."[12]

There is little evidence to suggest that many European settlers showed any antipathy for monarchy as such. "Most

of them retained a genuine affection for the ruling houses of their respective countries, and it was by no means exceptional for them to hang in the living room a print, sometimes only a newspaper illustration, of the monarch whose allegience they had forsworn."[13] This statement, of course, does not intimate that these people were actively pro-monarchist, but rather that they were probably less anti-monarchist than they were pro-democratic.

We may, by way of consolidating these observations, observe with Oscar Handlin that "With few exceptions, immigrants were complete strangers to the democratic process. In no country where emigration was a considerable phenomenon did the suffrage extend to those sections of the population which departed for America. Even in England, property qualifications kept farm and city laborers from voting until the Reform Bill of 1867. . . .Even further from self-government were the depressed subjects of the feudal monarchies of eastern Europe. To all, the very techniques of democracy were foreign."[14]

The immigration phenomenon was not, it appears, born primarily of severe political repression and discontent, though such an interpretation must not be altogether ignored. Integration of the immigrant into the American political system was, moreover, not a spontaneous explosion of pent-up democratic impulses screaming for expression. Often, perhaps too often to suit many current political students, this process was accomplished through careful cultivation by the notorious political "boss."[15]

There are those who claim that despite the absence of "democratic" habit, attitude, or inclination, immigration unintentionally promoted the cause of democracy in America. The core of this argument stated by Oscar Handlin is that immigration was ". . .a substantial factor in preventing political parties from acquiring a rigid class or ideological affiliation, and thus contributed to set one of the conditions of American demodracy."[16] This concept will receive treatment throughout the paper, so no attempt will be made here to give a comprehensive evaluation of its merits. One might caution, however, that the United States was an established and functioning republican government prior to the immigration years of 1820 to 1930. The Constitutional changes during this era--13th through 20th Amendments--could only very remotely be traced to immigration. Perhaps here is a situation contrary to that suggested by Mr. Handlin. Far from setting the "conditions of American democracy," the conditions had been set in 1787, and it was to the conditions of the United States Constitutional system that the immigrants adapted. Obviously it cannot be said that conditions in 1787 which influenced the Constitution were affected by events which followed its adoption.

One may make the criticism that, even if the immigrants were not largely the atoms of democracy in the model of our romantic folklore, their numbers were sufficiently diluted by the throngs of native "democratic" yeomanry as to not radically alter the basic democratic

character of our society. If the question were to be probed, the legendary concept of the yeoman democrat would likely go the way of that surrounding the immigrants just discussed. But should that be the result, there truly would be little reason for surprise. Modern statistical evidence indicates that even today--in 20th century America where citizens have been born into the democratic tradition, nursed on a diet of its virtues, trained in its techniques, and constantly assured by politicians that they are a great democratic people--we are not the stalwart democrats we ought to be. Indeed, if our forebearers were democratic yeomen as we imagine and as ~~whom~~ we are so often told, this trait appears not to be an inheritable one.

Modern Statistical Evidence Regarding the Democratic Nature of American Society

Modern statistical evidence reveals a sharp difference in the "democratic" responses of citizens depending on whether the questions are asked in the abstract or the abstractions are distilled into concrete questions of procedure and practice. Americans tend to give the expected "democratic" answers to the former and disappointingly human answers to the latter.

A Prothro and Grigg study in 1960* involving samples from a midwestern and a southern community reveals the following: "In the two communities from which our samples were drawn, consensus can be said to exist among the voters on the basic principles of democracy when they are put in

*See Appendix, page 34, for Table of statistics.

abstract terms."[17] The study further reveals that "When these broad principles are translated into more specific propositions, however, consensus breaks down completely."[18] Prothro and Grigg conclude their research by saying, "Assuming that the United States is a democracy, we cannot say without qualification that consensus on fundamental principles is a necessary condition for the existence of a democracy."[19]

In a later (1964) study by Herbert McCloskey, the results are much the same. Consensus, as defined for the purposes of this study, is "a level of agreement reaching 75 percent."[20] The findings: In the questions (12) asked measuring the electorate's "Response to items expressing 'Rules of the Game,'" there is no consensus on any of the twelve questions.[21] In "Responses to items expressing support for specific applications of free speech and procedural rights," there is consensus on only two of nine questions.[22] "Responses to items expressing belief in equality" reveal no consensus on any of fifteen questions.[23] But, we learn, "The picture changes somewhat when we turn from 'Rules of the Game' to items which in a broad, general way express belief in freedom of speech and opinion."[24] On "Responses to items expressing support for general statements of free speech and opinion," consensus exists on seven of eight questions.[25] From his study Professor McCloskey remarks that "The electorate displays a substantial measure of unity chiefly in its support of freedom in the abstract; on most

other features of democratic belief and practice it is sharply divided."[26] His final conclusion seems to vary little from that of Prothro and Grigg: "Our first and most obvious conclusion is that, contrary to the familiar claim, a democratic society can survive despite widespread popular misunderstanding and disagreement about basic democratic and constitutional values."[27] McCloskey states that the findings from his study ". . .furnish little comfort for those who wish to believe that a passion for freedom, tolerance, justice, and other democratic values springs spontaneously from the lower depths of society. . ."[28] One might now venture to comment that we are not a great and united "democratic" people, but just a great people, or perhaps even just another people with a good government.

Naturally these studies are open to significant criticisms. One feature of both is that some of their evidence--i.e. that the electorate tends toward consensus on abstract democratic principles--appears to be contradicted by their conclusions that consensus on fundamental democratic principles is not a requisite for democracy. A possible explanation for this inconsistency is that the authors assign a critical difference in meanings between the words "abstract" and "fundamental." Aside from this apparent incongruity, a person dissatisfied with the conclusions may always take issue with the methodology. One contending the validity of the conclusions might question the composition of the

sampling, the phrasing of the questions, and the lamentable fact that people (even-or especially political students) do not often distinguish between the concepts of tolerance and indifference, or liberty and license. However, no one who argues the conclusions has yet adduced contrary evidence to support his opposition. With a fair degree of certainty, it may be stated that if by "basically democratic" Professor Dahl meant a society teeming with individual democrats, he was, simply, off target.

Pluralism and Diversity As They Relate to the Democratic Nature of American Society

One other possible alternative for the definition of "democratic society" is that society which is marked by diversity among the attitudes and interests of the citizenry, or pluralism. The gist of Professor Dahl's chapter on "Polyarchal Democracy" is to admonish us to direct our fixation from the Constitutional separation of powers to the social separation of powers.[29] These considerations of social balance of power were not ignored by the Founders, as witnessed by Madison's The Federalist, No. 10. The question, as all--including Professor Dahl--will admit, is one of degree.[30]

Diversity has been a constant and necessary companion to the human condition, in any place and at any time. "Sexual recombination imposes diversity on living beings. Evaluated by environment, that diversity becomes inequality."[31] A person could just as well list air as a

prerequisite to popular government, for the latter is never found outside the presence of the former. The Soviet Union, despite a blend of nationalities and ethnic groups in a number perhaps not duplicated in any other nation-state, remains a system believed by many to be something less than the apotheosis of popular government. If it be proposed that consensus must exist on the basic social goals and that diversity must be restricted to means only, the defense of diversity as a pre-condition to popular government weakens proportional to this restriction on its definition. But apparently diversity, in a broad sense, is a feature as common to dictatorships as to democracies. Diversity understood as differentiation surely cannot be said to be a parent, or even a midwife, to popular government.

We can if we wish, and perhaps we should, attach a definition to pluralism which would distinguish it from diversity. Let us define pluralism as that social condition in which a number of various interest groups contend for power within a framework of agreed norms, and then study the claim that this is a social pre-condition for democracy. This is not a new theory, and it finds favor among many modern political students. The argument has an alluring cogency which, if one grants the rationality of the human being, becomes nearly irrefutable by rational analysis. However, the assumption of rationality may be the central defect of the doctrine. Conventionally, this argument proposes that the division of society into

specialized groups has brought forth an interdependence that makes an unwarranted attack on a group an indirect attack on oneself. The restraint demanded by this situation constitutes the social checks and balances. As we have become more specialized, we have come closer together. "Diversity has made for unity."[32] In times past this social condition has been interpreted as a Providential design, ". . . as a means of promoting the universal brotherhood of man."[33] This is a most seductive argument for its simple, solid rationality.

But then we are confronted with the facts of current events. The cynical spectator might wonder whether the "agreed norms" of interest groups are not poorly camouflaged manifestations of might making right. Our present situation resembles Hobbes' "all against all." That proverbial Martian visitor would find our survival instincts strange indeed as he observed our "brotherhood" in action. In the industrial, "democratic" societies of the West, he would wonder in amazement at the disastrous coal strikes in Britain, the government employees' strikes in France, and the myriad strikes in Italy. Closer home, he would marvel at the instinct for the jugular of our own men and women in white who have discovered perhaps the ultimate weapon of the competition--the sick, the ailing, and the dying, who are in a position to offer neither check nor balance in this pluralistic arrangement.[34]

So what is the contribution of this brotherhood to popular government? Its role is to introduce a new precariousness, a new fragility, a new vulnerability to these governments. Even in Britain, the Mother of Parliaments, speculation is circulating as to whether this particular brand of pluralism may not be the knell of parliamentary democracy there.[35] Certainly we must conclude the relation of pluralism to popular government is at best indeterminate, at worst, inimical.

The Japanese Experience with Parliamentary Democracy

An interesting exercise might be to introduce the modern Japanese experience into this discussion. This would provide an excellent test case for the stated hypothesis we are examining. Almost universally historians mark the beginning of Japan's modest heritage of liberal politics from the "Meiji Restoration" in 1867-68. The traditional social system was beginning to modernize, and a period of experimentation in forms of government followed the Restoration. During this period, mostly the 1870's, some Japanese political leaders became acquainted with the liberal Western tradition of Locke, Mill, Montesquieu, et al. Then in 1889 the "Meiji Constitution" was adopted. Modeled more along the line of the authoritarian Austrian and Prussian systems, it made few concessions to the doctrine of representative government. The Meiji Constitution was not intended to introduce a democratic political system to Japan, but

it did provide an environment in which embryonic democratic thought could incubate. Until 1932 there were periods when the democratic spirits enjoyed more or less influence in Japanese politics.[36] But following a period of parliamentary democracy marked by corruption and ineptitude, the assassination of the Prime Minister in 1932 heralded a change of political society in Japan. "It [the assassination] marked a reversion to authoritarian and militaristic ways that were certainly more in the mainstream of Japan's political traditions than were the brief years of 'liberalism.'"[37]

The post-war Constitution which fairly imposed parliamentary government on Japan was "'. . .filled with ideas and concepts completely foreign to Japanese history, tradition, and values.'"[38] Without the benefit of a liberal tradition which western democracies take for granted,[39] "Japan is the first Asian country to develop a strong and viable democracy although she had no democratic tradition. Her system of government and politics was thoroughly authoritarian and this was consistent with the social and political values the Japanese held as good."[40]

The point of this cursory review of parliamentary government in Japan has been to give a modern example in which popular government has germinated in other than democratic soils watered by a long liberal tradition and warmed by the "proper" social prerequisites. There are, of course, reasons given for the success of parliamentary democracy in

Japan besides its promulgation by her conqueror: she had lost a war, was in a state of post-war dislocation and chaos, had an enlightened occupation, was equipped with the basic machinery of a modern state, and in post-war Japan authoritarianism had been discredited.[41]

Valid criticism may be advanced against the use of the Japanese example. Foremost among them is the fact that, despite its success to the present, parliamentary government cannot yet be considered an established characteristic of Japan. The modern Japanese experience not only casts doubt on Professor Dahl's thesis, but also on most other speculations on democratic theory as well. But, though it may serve limited purposes, the Japanese example nonetheless has merit as a kind of test case for Professor Dahl's proposition.

Social and Individual Behavioral Requisites for a Democratic Order

The foregoing has been an attempt to recommend for the reader's consideration the idea that American society has never been "basically democratic," allowing various definitions of the phrase. Yet obviously the Constitution has survived, contrary to Professor Dahl's thesis. Further, the question has been raised whether such a society, if it ever existed, is indeed the sine qua non of democratic government that Professor Dahl supposes it to be. But now another interesting proposition suggested by him requires some attention. Hopefully, its intriguing qualities are

not the result of personal misinterpretation, for this proposition, unlike the other, is implied rather than explicit.

Professor Dahl makes reference to the probable overriding importance of personality types and social training and habits to a successful democracy. By successful is meant a non-tyrannical, as well as long-lived, democracy. This brand of democracy is perhaps not an altogether common species of the genus, and it is also slightly different from the generic democracy which has till now been exposited.

One would be hard put to name a student of popular government who was not considerate of some social characteristics and their relation to government. Professor Dahl, however, is marked by his emphasis on these factors. His chapter on "Polyarchal Democracy" is his attempted explanation of American government in a manner consistent with modern thought and evidence. Individual personal factors such as legitimate behavior in primary groups, prevailing or modal personality types, conscience, attitudes, and basic predispositions are crucial in determining whether a society is inclined toward non-tyrannical democracy.[42] The theory of polyarchy focuses on such social prerequisites for a democratic order.[43] These social prerequisites, we are told, are of capital importance in strengthening democracy and ". . .the theory of polyarchy suggests that the first and crucial variables to which

political scientists must direct their attention are social and not constitutional."[44]

The Founders, as Professor Dahl acknowledges, were not oblivious to some of these factors. An example of this philosophy which almost forecasts Professor Dahl is provided by Mr. Pinckney, who says "that a system [of government] must be suited to the habits and genius of the people it is to govern, and must grow out of them."[45] But most of the Founders were unwilling to stake the survival of their republic on a modulating social structure and individual behavior, the latter of which was generally dimly viewed by them.

Indeed, these men today are often either summarily dismissed as surly old grumps or politely disdained for their unflattering assumptions about human nature. Mr. Hamilton assures us that ". . .men are ambitious, vindictive, and rapacious."[46] In a similar view Dr. Franklin warns that two passions which have a powerful influence over the affairs of men are ambition and avarice, love of power and love of money.[47] Mr. Madison observes that "If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary."[48] These statements are presented for the purpose of confirming our common knowledge of the Founders' axioms on human nature, axions which often find little favor among modern political students.

Professor Dahl is among those who reject these assumtions in favor of some more consistent with modern psycological study. "Polyarchy is a function of the total social training in all the norms."[49] Contrast to this psychological concept of man as preponderately a product of his social training is provided by some relatively recent evidence from the natural sciences which indicates that human nature is far more than the tabula rasa supposed by a B. F. Skinner.

The direction of what is called by some a revolution in the natural sciences points inexorably to the proposition that "Man's nature, like his body, is the product of evolution."[50] Some of the behavioral characteristics required by this evolutionary process are not particularly of great aesthetic beauty. We are asked to devote some thought to the significance of our ape-like ancestor's life on the ground in a hostile environment. From such a life, primate students now propose, was demanded increased aggressiveness and tighter social organization.[51]

The heralds of the classless state are confident that social classes are the product of chronic social pathology. Disregarding as they may the appearance of hierarchy in all observed societies, whether primitive, pre-industrial, or industrial,[52] the accumulating evidence of the natural sciences indicating that the drive to dominate one's fellows may be 300 or 400 million years old[53] must seem the most heinous of capitalist conspiracies. Freudians

also have little to cheer about with this new revolution, for evidence strongly suggests that "Both territory and dominance may be compulsions more powerful than sex."[54] And these proposals are only the beginning of the modern heresy introduced in the natural sciences. Two of the greatest subversives of the behavioral school are Konrad Lorenz, with his extensive work on ethology, and Raymond Dart, who proposes, with a menagerie of corroborating fossil evidence, that man evolved from a predatory ape.[55]

Doubts even arise concerning the sanctity of a human property which has been most extravagantly venerated--that of human conscience. Though James Madison regarded it as an inadequate inhibiting force on those passions which may threaten the existence of popular government,[56] we recall Professor Dahl's reliance on conscience as a necessary social prerequisite to democracy. But such reliance is questionable when we consider the conclusions of an observer of the revolution in the natural sciences:

> . . .conscience as a guiding force in the human drama is one of such small reliability that it assumes very nearly the role of villain. Conscience has evolved directly from the amity-enmity complex of our primate past. But unlike civilization it has acted as no force to inhibit the predatory instince. It has instead been the conqueror's chief ally. And if mankind survives the contemporary predicament, it will be in spite of, not because of, the parochial powers of our animal conscience.[57]

If the contribution of human nature to "democracy" has been presented as wholly negative, then it might be well to

advance a theory somewhat to the contrary. The study of the modern German physiologist, Paul Leyhausen, has led him to believe that the drive of dominance over a territory guarantees the right and liberty of the individual, making territorial behavior in man a force for democracy. But the increasing density of population promotes absolute hierarchy and presents an incalculable threat to true democracy.[58] As a theory, this explanation does not account for the relative success of popular government in the densely populated Benelux countries, and its conspicuous absence from the more sparsely peopled Soviet Union or the African interior. But as an incompletely examined theory, it may have merit worthy of further study.

A survey of recent developments (many of which postdate Professor Dahl's lectures in 1956) in the natural sciences tends to justify a favorable re-evaluation of the Founders' axioms on human nature as compared to those of Professor Dahl. Observing human activity, one finds it difficult to share his confidence that our knowledge of behavior is sufficient to permit the acceptance of many conclusions as to which behavior patterns may be positively related to democracy and those which we have the power to alter. When Desmond Morris implies that Adolph Hitler's "vast lust for power" may be related to the absence of one testicle, as revealed by autopsy,[59] one can only wonder just how nefarious Hitler would have been had both testicles been missing. It simply is mind-boggling to think of thirty

million deaths caused possibly in part by the absence of one man's testicle. There is, as a matter of subjective opinion, a degree of imprecision in the yet youthful "psycho" studies adequate to arouse skepticism from those other than the devoted obscurant*ist* regarding the application of these studies to questions such as those being raised by Professor Dahl.

The evidence from the natural sciences is not being presented here as the final authority as opposed to the "psycho" sciences on the matter of human behavior. Future developments in these disciplines may eventually see the emergence of one of them as undisputed master on the subject. However, it must be admitted that evidence from the natural sciences casts serious doubts on the validity of some of our modern behavioral dogma, and that is the reason for its inclusion in this investigation.

Social Determinism and the Democratic Order

Thus far historical, statistical, emperical, and some "scientific" evidence has been employed in examining the two propositions concerning the society-government relation. These two propositions have been considered separately, but when considered together they imply a single, larger concept which should be subjected to inspection. The concept, if the writer may attempt to affix a name to it, may be called the "social determinist" interpretation of the correlation between society and government--

the nature of the society is the determinant of its government. Believing such an inference as to his underlying thesis to be justified by the sense of Professor Dahl's arguments, some of which have been quoted herein, the writer will direct the final phase of this investigation toward a few speculative observations concerning this general concept.

One major defect in the social determinist doctrine is its refusal to acknowledge the possibility that a government is capable of more than merely reflecting the social and personal characteristics of its citizenry. Indeed, governments may be among the chief forces in shaping the character of social attitudes, construction, and behavior. Foremost among these governments are the totalitarian regimes, whose energies may be spent largely on preparing a reluctant society for some irreverent mystic's vision of the millenium. At the opposite extreme are those Jacobin democracies[60] which pander spinelessly, though democratically, to popular passion and popular will, coming to rest on the lowest denominator of the social composition.[61]

Between the extremes, though certainly not in their middle, is republican government. This government admonishes its citizens to exercise self-restraint in the practice of self-government, but it is structured in a manner so as to restrain behavior of its citizens in the likely event that they momentarily forsake this republican virtue. Being devoted more to restraining, rather than to

exacerbating, this government is freed from the mob atmosphere sufficiently to allow it to pursue the public interest and the general welfare, as opposed to the public, or general, will. Men who had witnessed the dangers to liberty from the "democratic licentiousness of the State Legislatures"[62] were vividly aware that a successful popular government must be so constructed as to function in a respectable manner even when the citizens' self-restraint was marginal. The attitude is succinctly expressed by Mr. Madison: "In all very numerous assemblies, of whatever characters composed, passion never fails to wrest the sceptre from reason. Had every Athenian citizen been a Socrates, every Athenian assembly would still have been a mob."[63]

So there are in these three examples at least that many variations on the society-government relation. In the totalitarian example we cannot say whether government is the product of social factors or, contrarily, whether social construction is a result of government policy. The concept of social determinism would seem inadequate to describe this situation. The democracies which aspire to nothing higher than servility to the "public will" are perhaps more amenable to the social determinist explanation. But the question of American government, which has been our concern, is of a republic, a government to which the social determinist doctrine is inapplicable. Republican government is purposely more than the sum of its social components: "The original republican idea of self government

was what we would today call high minded. The self which was supposed to govern is necessarily conceived of as being a better self than the self which naturally exists, and the purpose of the republic, in all its aspects, is necessarily a self-improving one."[64] To the degree this feature of republican government is ignored by Professor Dahl, his social determinist explanation of the origin and duration of American government is commensurately less acceptable.

The absolute neglect by Professor Dahl of the contributions to the development resulting from individual human discovery, invention, and design is a critical omission. Why these considerations are sacrificed in deference to a theory that popular government is the denouement of largely impersonal forces is a matter of conjecture. A few selected observations on the importance of these elements to human affairs may suffice to demonstrate the responsibility of any theorist of popular government to make an account of them.

Calling again on the people of the natural sciences, we learn that civilization itself--as opposed to society--is quite probably a human invention. The invention of the long distance weapon, the bow and arrow, was also the birth of the human as an individual. With this new development the already large brain was liberated from the inhibitions previously mandated by the communal hunting society.[65] "It was the individual who created our

civilizations. After millions of years of social repression the individual, released, released the great brain."[66] If the individual is responsible for the creation of civilization, and government is an element of civilization, then clearly political theory cannot overlook the importance of the individual when contemplating the origin of government. More central to our investigation is one of the signal discoveries of "the great brain" so far as students of popular government are concerned--that is, natural law.

Walter Lippmann was perhaps most prominent among the modern political students who assigned to the natural law doctrine a central role in the establishment and functioning of popular government. Ancient Roman jurists joined in a series of speculations which came to constitute a general body of thought known as natural law.[67] Lippmann states,

> Except on the premises of this philosophy it is impossible to reach intelligible and workable conceptions of popular election, majority rule, representative assemblies, free speech, loyalty, property, corporations, and voluntary associations. The founders of these institutions, which the recently enfranchised democracies have inherited, were all of them adherents of some one of the various schools of natural law.[68]

This concept received constructive treatment by influential political thinkers from Aristotle to Aquinas to Locke. We may begin to think of popular government as something of an elitist concept. Certainly it is difficult to deny that, tracing them to their historical

origins, ". . .free institutions and democracy were conceived and established by men who adhered to a public philosophy [natural law]."[69] Even V. O. Key, Jr., asserts that the vitality of democracy is not in the masses, but rather in a "substantial sprinkling of persons throughout the population concerned with the public weal and animated by a faith in the system."[70] Or, as Walter Lippmann observes, the suffrage on a large scale has generally followed, not preceded, the establishment of free institutions: ". . .the enfranchised masses have not, surprisingly enough, been those who most staunchly defended the institutions of freedom."[71]

Admittedly, the relation between individual human initiative and popular government is a fit subject for separate treatment. In such a drama natural law would appear probably as the protagonist supported by other major and minor characters. Attention here has focused on the contributions of natural law to the working concept of popular government only to demonstrate the insufficiency of any theory of popular government which fails to take an account of it.

Qualifying, Clarifying, and Summarizing Remarks

Professor Dahl describes his essays as an attempt to "raise questions that would need to be answered by a satisfactory theory of democratic politics."[72] In so doing he has conformed to the laudable convention of

constructing arguments based on certain premises which resolve into logical conclusions. The efforts of this writer's criticism have been directed toward what he thinks to be a couple of the primary premises of Professor Dahl. One of these premises, hinted at throughout the essays and explicitly stated in one passage, maintains that we have a democratic government because we have been, and are, a democratic people. We allowed several common meanings to the term "democratic" and examined the degree to which such a term fairly characterizes our society.

Historically, little evidence was found indicating a residence of the "democratic spirit" in American society. During the formative years of the republic, whatever democratic characteristics we may wish to believe existed were offset by licentious state legislatures and monarchial sympathies in certain sections of the population.

The folklore surrounding the immigration phenomenon and its supposed contributions to American democracy were found to be more myth than fact. The evidence failed to reveal any intense pro-democratic dispositions among the immigrants as a group. The suggestion that the immigration movement somehow set conditions for American democracy is questionable when one considers the fact that this movement could hardly have affected extensively an event which preceded it. None of the Constitutional Amendments of that era could be directly traced to the mass immigration movement. Thus it seems legitimate to

believe that the immigrants adapted more to the United States Constitutional system than vice versa.

Little more encouraging for those attached to the notion of the essentially democratic nature of our society was the consideration of some modern statistical data. This research failed to confirm any such notion, and the researchers themselves hesitated to conclude that such a condition was necessarily a prerequisite to democratic government. Allowing that a democratic society might be synonymous with a society marked by diversity or pluralism, this writer attempted a brief discussion of their apparent effects on modern governments. The fruits of this discussion were inconclusive. Diversity was found to be a universal condition of human societies, and pluralism, particularly as represented by interest group competition, could not be identified as either a requisite for democracy or its bane.

The exercise outlining the recent Japanese experience was intended to present a modern test case for Professor Dahl's statement. This one example was believed to pose less problematically most of the issues which had earlier been examined in greater detail and which, like some other issues, could not be adequately explained by his hypothesis. If Professor Dahl's hypothesis is true for American government but not for the Japanese government, we must then conclude it to be a parochial and not a universal proposition.

The indirect thesis drawn from Professor Dahl's essays revealed a marked emphasis on the importance of personal and social habits, such as conscience and modal behavior, to a successful democracy. A high reliance was placed on the capacity to instruct society in the norms requisite for a democracy. This philosophy eschews the Founders' axioms of human nature as largely fixed. For these axioms is substituted the idea that we may create a democratic government by first constructing democratic individuals and society. Rhetorically the question was raised as to whether our present knowledge in the "psycho" sciences justified such an idea. Inspection of some new evidence from the natural sciences indicated that man may be every bit the rascal some of the Founders suspected him to be. Far from being a behavioral tabula rasa, the human being seems to have a rather definite, if limited, biological imprint on his behavior patterns.

After appropriating to the union of Professor Dahl's two propositions the term "social determinism," this writer's investigation pointed to some probable defects of such an explanation of popular government. This particular determinism is open to the same objections as nearly any determinist solution: it fails to acknowledge the complexity of cause-effect relationships; i.e. to recognize that society can be affected by its government as much as a government may be affected by its society. It

also neglects the role of human invention in human affairs--a serious oversight.

The recapitulation of these points should indicate that serious difficulties arise if a theory of popular government is to begin with two of the premises discussed at length here. Probably no theory can be constructed which would, for all, answer satisfactorily the tests that experience and curious minds can devise. At least, we have had little such success in the last 2500 years or so.

This inquiry has not necessarily attempted to prove anything in a manner acceptable to a logician or a mathematician; it could not presume to do so. Aside from contending the two premises of Professor Dahl, this venture has by indirection sought to force a re-evaluation of the larger question of social determinism. Particularly as it might apply to the American Constitutional system, this doctrine would seem inadequate. Certainly the Founders did not ignore social factors when setting about to construct a new government, but neither did they see themselves as mere instruments of forces beyond their control. The conflict between determinist and non-determinist philosophies finds insuperable expression by Alexander Hamilton:

> It has been frequently remarked, that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not, of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend, for their political constitution, on accident and force.[73]

Obviously Hamilton thought that men need not depend on forces beyond their control for their political constitution. He could have been wrong. But if so, we must admit that rarely has so enduring and honorable a document as the Constitution of the United States been constructed on a mistaken assumption.

APPENDIX

The following table was compiled by Prothro and Grigg in "Fundamental Principles of Democracy: Bases of Agreement and Disagreement," Journal of Politics, XXII, No. 21 (May 1960), p. 285.

TABLE 1
PERCENTAGE OF "DEMOCRATIC" RESPONSES TO BASIC PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY AMONG SELECTED POPULATION GROUPS

	TOTAL N=244	EDUCATION† High N=137	EDUCATION† Low N=106	ANN ARBOR N=144	TALLAHASSEE N=100	INCOME‡ High N=136	INCOME‡ Low N=99
MAJORITY RULE							
1. Only informed vote*	49.0	61.7	34.7	56.3	38.4	56.6	40.8
2. Only tax-payers vote*	21.0	22.7	18.6	20.8	21.2	20.7	21.0
3. Bar Negro from office*	80.6	89.7	68.6	88.5	66.7	83.2	77.8
4. Bar Communist from office*	46.3	56.1	34.0	46.9	45.5	48.9	43.0
5. AMA right to bloc voting**	45.0	49.6	39.2	44.8	45.5	45.5	44.4
MINORITY RIGHTS							
6. Allow anti-religious speech**	63.0	77.4	46.5	67.4	56.6	72.8	52.1
7. Allow socialist speech**	79.4	90.2	65.7	81.3	76.8	83.8	73.7
8. Allow Communist speech**	44.0	62.9	23.5	51.4	33.3	52.2	36.7
9. Bar Negro from candidacy*	75.5	86.5	60.2	85.6	58.0	78.6	71.1
10. Bar Communist from candidacy*	41.7	48.1	30.3	44.1	38.2	44.8	34.4

* For these statements, disagreement is recorded as the "democratic" response.
** For these statements, agreement is recorded as the "democratic" response.
† "High education" means more than 12 years of schooling; "low education," 12 years or less.
‡ "High income" means an annual family income of $6,000 or more; "low income," less than $6,000.

Footnotes for

"Observations on Selected Propositions
from
A Preface to Democratic Theory"

[1]Jacob Viner, The Role of Providence in the Social Order (Independence Square, Philadelphia, 1972), p. 58.

[2]Robert A. Dahl, A Preface to Democratic Theory (Chicago, 1956), p. 143.

[3]Herbert McCloskey, "Consensus and Ideology in American Politics," American Political Science Review, LVI, No. 2 (June, 1964), p. 361.

[4]Dahl, Preface, p. 36.

[5]James Madison, Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787 (Athens, Ohio, 1966), p. 42.

[6]Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, The Federalist, ed. Jacob E. Cooke (Middletown, Connecticut, 1961), p. 297.

[7]Dahl, Preface, p. 64.

[8]Alistair Cooke, America (New York, 1973), p. 133.

[9]David F. Bowers, ed., Foreign Influences in American Life (New York, 1952), p. 3.

[10]Marcus Lee Hansen, The Immigrant in American History (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1940), p. 81.

[11]Ibid., pp. 79-80.

[12]Ibid., p. 19.

[13]Ibid., p. 80.

[14]Bowers, Foreign Influences, pp. 85-86.

[15]Ibid., p. 86.

[16]Ibid., p. 98.

[17]Prothro and Grigg, "Fundamental Principles of Democracy: Bases of Agreement and Disagreement," Journal of Politics, XXII, No. 21 (May 1960), p. 284.

[18]Prothro and Grigg, "Fundamental Principles," p. 286.

[19]Ibid., p. 292.

[20]McCloskey, "Consensus and Ideology in American Politics," p. 363.

[21]Ibid., p. 364.

[22]Ibid., p. 367.

[23]Ibid., p. 369.

[24]Ibid., p. 365.

[25]Ibid., p. 366.

[26]Ibid., p. 373.

[27]Ibid., p. 376.

[28]Ibid., p. 375.

[29]Dahl, Preface, p. 83.

[30]Ibid., p. 78.

[31]Robert Ardrey, The Social Contract (New York, 1970), p. 37.

[32]James C. Davies, Human Nature in Politics (New York, 1963), p. 241.

[33]Viner, The Role of Providence in the Social Order, p. 32.

[34]Victor Riesel, "Dr. Kildare Walks Out," The Muncie Star (January 22, 1975), p. 4.

[35]Peter Jay, "How inflation threatens British democracy with its last chance before extinction," The London Times (July 1, 1974), p. 13.

[36]Robert E. Ward, Japan's Political System (New Jersey, 1967), pp. 8-11.

[37]Ibid., p. 15.

[38]Niranjan Bhiunya, Parliamentary Democracy in Japan (New Delhi-5, 1971), p. 10.

[39]Ibid., p.17.

[40]Bhiunya, Parliamentary Democracy, p. 1.

[41]Ibid., p. 1.

[42]Dahl, Preface, p. 18.

[43]Ibid., p. 82.

[44]Ibid., p. 83.

[45]Madison, Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787, p. 185.

[46]Hamilton, The Federalist, p. 28.

[47]Madison, Notes of Debates, pp. 52-53.

[48]Madison, The Federalist, p. 349.

[49]Dahl, Preface, p. 76.

[50]Robert Ardrey, African Genesis (New York, 1961), p. 155.

[51]Ardrey, Social Contract, p. 167.

[52]Davies, Human Nature in Politics, p. 249.

[53]Ardrey, African Genesis, p. 13.

[54]Ibid., p. 164.

[55]Ibid., p. 270.

[56]Madison, Notes of Debates, p. 76.

[57]Ardrey, African Genesis, p. 355.

[58]Ardrey, Social Contract, pp. 240-241.

[59]Desmond Morris, The Human Zoo (New York, 1969), p. 97.

[60]Walter Lippmann, The Public Philosophy (New York, 1955), p. 54.

[61]Irving Kristol, "Republican Virtue Vs. Servile Institutions," (third essay in a series of Poynter Pamphlets, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, May, 1974), p. 10.

[62]Madison, Notes of Debates, p. 110.

[63]Madison, The Federalist, p. 374.

[64]Kristol, "Republican Virtue," p. 12.

[65]Ardrey, Social Contract, p. 346.

[66]Ibid., p. 360.

[67]Lippmann, Public Philosophy, pp. 127-128.

[68]Ibid., pp. 79-80.

[69]Ibid., p. 123.

[70]V. O. Key, Jr., "Public Opinion and the Decay of Democracy," Virginia Quarterly Review, XXXVII (1961), p. 494.

[71]Lippmann, Public Philosophy, p. 38.

[72]Dahl, Preface, p. 1.

[73]Hamilton, The Federalist, p. 3.

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